

Welfare to Work National Teleconference

Topic: Changes in TANF

December 17, 2003

Panelist #1

Michelle Ganow-Jones
Senior Program Associate
The Finance Project/Welfare Information Network

Agenda

- Background on welfare reform and resulting outcomes
- The current status of TANF reauthorization proposals
- Major issues in the reauthorization debate
- The potential impacts of policy changes and additional considerations.

Please refer to the Power Point Presentation posted on HUD's WtW website for a brief summary regarding information provided by the first panelist. In addition, there are additional links where more information can be obtained. For general information on TANF reauthorization, please visit the Welfare Information Network TANF website at www.financeprojectsinfo.org/tanf and for more detailed information on reauthorization proposals, visit the American Public Human Services Association at www.aphsa.org

Panelist #2

Jeff Stell
TANF Program Analyst
Oregon Department of Human Services

Agenda

- Funding Issue
- Waivers
- Improving relationships between TANF and PHAs

Due to the current economic recession, many states have experienced a drop in revenue. As a result, these state TANF agencies have less money available to provide direct service to existing TANF clients and/or case management for new clients. As more people are impacted by the failing economy, the need to provide services has correspondingly increased. Furthermore, the reduced revenue has led to a reduction in TANF staff, thereby creating increased caseloads per caseworker. In almost all TANF agencies, case managers do more than just determine eligibility for TANF and/or case managing, they may also determine eligibility for additional resources such as child care, food stamps, Medicaid and other programs. It is anticipated that as the economy improves there should be more funding available to reinstate some of the services that were previously being provided.

Another issue that many states are dealing with is waivers. Under the national TANF time limit, clients can generally receive TANF for up to sixty months or five years. Because of a waiver in Oregon, clients could only receive TANF for twenty-four out of eighty-four months. For the months in which a client cooperated with their case plans, these months were not counted against the client on their assistance. Since 1996, Oregon has not closed any cases due to clients being over the time limit. This was mainly due to Oregon's waiver expiring at approximately the same time that reauthorization began, creating some confusion.

Looking to the future, TANF reauthorization is rapidly approaching, possibly sometime in March 2004. Since the reauthorization requirements will be different than they currently are, local TANF agencies are preparing to make additional program changes in order to be in compliance with any new rules and regulations.

In an effort to better serve the TANF client, both TANF and PHA staff must operate on a more personal level. Managers and their respective staff must be able to communicate with each other in a positive way and be able to discuss their respective challenges. In addition, input from front line staff should be eagerly and proactively sought after because they are working closely with clients daily. Their expertise and experience is invaluable to the overall effort of providing increased levels of client services. It would also be helpful for a person from the housing agency to be working directly out of the TANF office a few times a week and vice versa. This is extremely beneficial, particularly when challenges arise and all sides are present to interact with the client at the same time.

TANF and Public Housing agencies should also make a concerted effort to improve their relationship with local community action agencies that have funding to provide various services that mutual clients could benefit from.

Panelist's contact information

Michelle Ganow-Jones
Senior Program Associate
The Finance Project/Welfare Information Network
1401 New York Ave., NW Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 587-1024
(202) 628-4206

Jeff Stell
TANF Program Analyst
Oregon Department of Human Services
500 Summer St. NE E48
Salem, OR 97301-1066
(503) 945-6542
(503) 373-7032